

MEMORANDUM
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

26 February 1963

TO: Mr. McGeorge Bundy
Special Assistant to the
President

FROM: Adam Yarmolinsky *AY*

For coordination.

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Dear Senator Simpson:

The Secretary of Defense has asked me to reply to your letter of the 14th. My reply is keyed to the numbers of the questions in your letter.

1. Air surveillance of Cuba was sufficiently effective to frustrate the Soviet attempt to confront the U.S. with an operational MRBM and IRBM capability. We believe it is presently effective to detect any further such attempts.

2. The 42 missiles withdrawn from Cuba were all medium range missiles. Our conclusion that these were all of the medium range missiles introduced into Cuba and that no intermediate range missiles were introduced into Cuba is based on the analysis of the intelligence available to us from all sources. It is not based on any reliance on Khrushchev's word.

3. The President lifted the blockade because he felt it to be in the best interest of the United States at that time, because we were satisfied that the missiles had been removed, ~~and that the Soviets probably did not have the power to compel the Cubans to accept on-site inspection.~~ Castro is unwilling to accept on-site inspection at this time on terms acceptable to us, and in view of our surveillance capabilities we do not consider the issue essential enough to go to war over it.

4. We believe there has been not only no further increase in Soviet personnel strength in Cuba since the October crisis, but that there have been significant reductions. But precise personnel strength is extremely difficult to estimate from intelligence sources without a head-count, in contrast to identification of major pieces of military equipment.

5. We carried out reconnaissance flights over the island of Cuba on the 5th, 17th, 26th, 29th of September, the 5th, 7th, and 14th of October. The first hard evidence from these flights of the offensive missile buildup appeared in a photograph taken on October 14.

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3. The President lifted the blockade because he felt it to be in the best interest of the United States at that time. We were satisfied that the missiles had been removed. We had assurance that the bombers would be removed, as they soon were. Castro is unwilling to accept on-site inspection at this time on terms acceptable to us, and in view of our surveillance capabilities we do not consider this issue warranting continued quarantine.

6. There has been no substantial Soviet military buildup in Cuba since the October crisis. Soviet combat forces in Cuba today amount to what might be described as four reinforced battalions (about 3000 men).

7. The President has pointed out that "as long as Cuba is a Soviet military base, it represents a threat to people in the Caribbean." But, unlike the offensive missiles, the Soviet forces now in Cuba do not represent a military threat to the U. S. nor any of its allies.

8. Our actions to combat Communist subversion in the hemisphere through military and economic assistance, in the alliance for progress, and through joint activities with the internal security forces of our allies go well beyond expressions of concern.

9. We are attacking the problem of Communist subversion in Latin America whether it stems from Cuba or directly from Moscow.

10. We would not agree that the President has failed to grasp the temper of the American people.

11. We fail to see the inconsistency between support of overseas bases and replacement of obsolescent weapons by more modern ones. The replacement of the obsolescent Jupiters could scarcely be a part of any agreement or understanding with Khrushchev, since the net effect of this replacement will be to strengthen NATO and military capabilities.

12. We know that the ATKARSK was in Cienfuegos on 5 December. We also received information that the ATKARSK cargo, believed to be electronic equipment, was discharged at night, and that it was hauled away in trucks to an unknown destination. The ATKARSK does not have large hatches suitable for carrying missiles or bomber aircraft in the holds, and its decks were observed to be clear of such cargo before landing in Cuba.

13. We are not aware of any talk of disbanding brigade 2506. The Defense Department program for brigade members is described in the attached press release.

14. No.

15. The onslaught of communism in any nation, whether it is 90 miles or 9,000 miles from our shores, is a good deal easier to stop before it is established. The steps that this Administration has

taken throughout the world, from Vietnam to Latin America, are designed to frustrate Communist aggression before it can take hold.

16. We do not accept the precedent of a Sovietized Cuba.

I trust these responses will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

David E. McGiffert
Assistant to the Secretary
(Legislative Affairs)

Enclosure

Honorable Milward L. Simpson

United States Senate